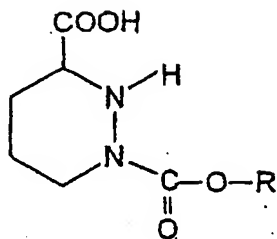
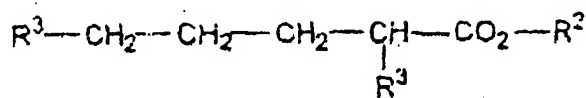


**In the Claims:**

**Claim 1** (currently amended)      A process for preparing a hexahydropyridazine-3-carboxylic acid derivative of the formula



wherein R is selected from the group consisting of saturated or unsaturated, substituted or unsubstituted alkyl, substituted or unsubstituted aralkyl substituted or unsubstituted aryl comprising reacting a compound of the formula

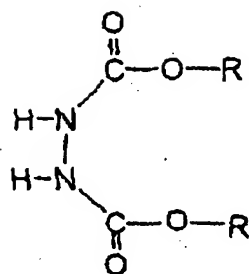


II

wherein R<sup>2</sup> is substituted or unsubstituted alkyl and

R<sup>3</sup> is halogen or a nucleofugal organic group,

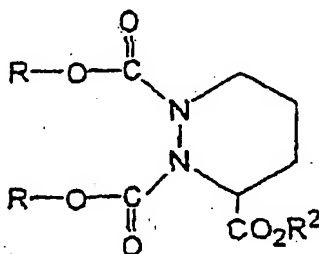
with a compound of the formula



III

whereas R has the above meaning,

in the presence of a base with a  $pK_a$  greater than or equal to 8.5, in an organic ketone solvent to a tetrahydro-1,2,3-pyridazine-tricarboxylate intermediate compound of the formula



IV

wherein R and  $R^2$  have the above meanings, which is not isolated and which is treated with a basic aqueous medium, to obtain the hexahydropyridazine-3-carboxylic acid derivative of formula (I).

**Claim 2** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 1, wherein the organic ketone solvent is selected from the group consisting of acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, methyl isobutyl ketone, methyl tert-butyl ketone and diisopropyl ketone, and mixtures thereof.

**Claim 3** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 1 wherein the base used in the first reaction is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal carbonates and tertiary amines.

**Claim 4** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 1 wherein the solvent is acetone.

**Claim 5** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 1 wherein the base used in the first reaction is potassium carbonate.

**Claim 6** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 1 wherein the base used for the second reaction is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal hydroxides and alkali metal or alkaline-earth metal alkoxides.

**Claim 7** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 6 wherein the alkali metal hydroxides are used in aqueous solution.

**Claim 8** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 6 wherein the base is sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide.

**Claim 9** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 1 wherein, for the second reaction, the temperature is 25°C to 55°C and the volume of water is 1 to 10 liters per kilogram of compound of formula (III).

**Claim 10** (previously presented)      The process of claim 9 wherein the reaction is performed by applying different successive temperature stages within the range.

**Claim 11** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 1 wherein the compound of formula (I) is obtained in crystalline form by mixing the reaction medium with a solvent in which the compound of formula (I) is insoluble and which is a diluent for alcohols, and by adjusting the pH of the medium to 0.5 to 2 using an acid.

**Claim 12** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 11 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of aromatic hydrocarbons, aliphatic hydrocarbons, ethers and acetates.

**Claim 13** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 11 wherein the acid is hydrochloric acid.

**Claim 14** (currently amended)      The process of Claim 1 wherein R<sup>1</sup> is phenyl or naphthyl, R<sup>2</sup> is of 1 to 4 carbon atoms and R<sup>3</sup> is halogen.

**Claim 15** (previously presented)      The process of Claim 14, wherein R<sup>1</sup> is phenyl, R<sup>2</sup> is methyl and R<sup>3</sup> is bromine.